

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 6616:
“AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE
TO IMMIGRATION STATUS”**

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Katherine Kennedy, and I am a physician specializing in psychiatry. I teach in the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University and have a private practice in New Haven. I reside in Branford. These opinions are my own and do not reflect those of Yale University.

I stand in support of HB 6616 because I believe that health care is a human right. Everyone, regardless of immigration status, needs and deserves access to preventative healthcare coverage, including regular outpatient visits with vaccinations and routine screenings.

I want to thank all the members of the Connecticut General Assembly who voted to pass critical legislation in 2021 and 2022 that expanded HUSKY for all Connecticut residents up to age 12, regardless of immigration status. Since those new laws were enacted last month, hundreds of newly eligible children have enrolled in HUSKY. Finally, these children can access the healthcare they need to stay healthy, prevent new illnesses, and address minor medical concerns BEFORE those minor issues turn into major medical problems requiring ER visits, hospitalizations, and more.

Connecticut can't stop at age 12. These newly enrolled children have families. They have siblings older than 12. They have parents. All children need parents who are healthy enough to provide and care for them. Connecticut must expand access to HUSKY to include eligible immigrants of all ages -- teens, parents, and adults -- regardless of immigration status.

Connecticut can't afford not to expand HUSKY. According to a [2022 RAND](#) study (reference below):

- Investing in healthcare for immigrant communities will reduce long-term healthcare costs.
- Savings to hospitals from reduced uncompensated care costs could amount to roughly \$63.3 million annually.
- Connecticut has an emergency Medicaid program that covers emergency care to individuals who qualify based on income, regardless of immigration status. The costs for this program were approximately \$15 million in 2021, and this fund would be substantially reduced by insuring the immigrant community.

I support HB 6616, and I ask the Committee to support and pass this critically-needed legislation to expand HUSKY to all eligible people in Connecticut, regardless of immigration status. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katherine Kennedy MD
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Reference:

Rao, Preethi, Federico Girosi, and Christine Eibner, Expanding Insurance Coverage to Undocumented Immigrants in Connecticut. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1964-1.html.